

An Assessment of Community Participation in the Sustainability of School Feeding Programme in Primary Schools: A Case of Embakasi, Kenya

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Abstract

The sponsorship of the School Feeding Programme in Kenya is through the World Food Programme (WFP) initiatives. The WFP's new five-year development program (2009-2013) has emphasized the need to hand the program over to the Government after 28 years of assistance (WFP, 2008). In an effort to transition away from WFP assistance and create a more sustainable and locally integrated program, the Ministry of Education began implementing a Homegrown School Feeding Program (HGSFP) in July of 2009 (Espejo 2009).

To retain momentum of school going initiated by the NARC government in 2002 which resulted in mass enrollment to primary schools by Kenyan children, hence sustainability was one of the key factors of this enrollment, the feeding programme, has to be addressed by all stakeholders.

The general objective of this study was to assess the sustainability of school feeding programme in Kenya after WFP exit. It explored the challenges of Community participation. A descriptive study design was used to collect quantitative and qualitative data and adopted deliberate sampling technique.

A likert scale of 1 = strongly-disagree to 5 = strongly-agree was used to rate community participation. The mean rating after analysis was 3.51 meaning with community participation sustainability would be achieved.

Key words: Sustainability, Community participation, School feeding programme

Introduction

Kenya is an oil-importing, food-deficit country, which ranks 147th out of 179 on the UNDP's Human Development Index 2009. It is at the lower end of the middle-income class of countries but exhibits great variability in agro-ecological characteristics, livelihood systems and income levels. 80% of its almost 40 million people live in rural areas, but most of the land is not suitable for rain-fed agriculture and is subject to severe drought. Kenya imports 20% of its

cereal needs (2009). The largest pockets of vulnerability to hunger are concentrated in regions with arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs), which account for two thirds of the total land mass. In January 2003 the NARC (National Rainbow Coalition) government implemented the free primary education programme with the aim of providing more opportunities to the disadvantaged school age children (Otach, 2008). The programme created a positive outcome because it resulted in significant increase in enrolment in a majority of the schools (Otach, 2008). The policy abolished school fees and other levies arguing that fees and levies posed a serious hindrance to children wanting to access education in schools (Okwach & George, 1997). The free primary education policy has been described as laudable (Rob et al., 2004), because of its effect on gross enrolment rate (GER) which increased from 92% in 2002 to 104% in 2003 of the school age children population (Otach, 2008)), resulting in more than 1.5 million children who were previously out-of-school joining primary schools (UNESCO, 2005). Since the introduction of free compulsory primary education for all Kenyan children in 2003, the WFP-assisted feeding program has developed alongside national policies of increased student health, attendance, and performance (MoE 2003). From its inception, it has targeted food inequality in the most vulnerable areas of Kenya, including school districts in the ASAL and the informal urban slums of large cities such as Nairobi and Mombasa (Espejo 2009). To address historical primary school absenteeism among Kenya's most impoverished and traditional communities, free meals are used as an incentive to attract school-aged children to class.

Within rural communities in which food is scarce, this daily meal provision relieves much of the burden of childrearing. The beneficiaries of the program are extremely poor families that are largely unable to provide the minimum recommended daily allowances (RDA) of calories, protein, and essential micronutrients to their children. Rural schools that provide meals show higher attendance rates and lower initial dropout rates than schools that do not (Espejo 2009).

Approximately 80 percent of Kenyans live in rural areas and eke out a living as farmers, and poor land quality and chronic water shortages have put the country in a constant state of food insecurity (UNESCO 2005). Although its economy boasts a sizeable agricultural sector (mainly focused on exports of first-world luxuries like flowers, tea, and coffee), Kenya is a food-deficit country with less than 20 percent of its land suitable for successful cultivation. Compounding these difficulties, frequent and severe droughts in the historically precarious Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) land and scarce water (MoA 2010). 1.2 million Children in 3,600 schools—nearly 21.3 percent of all primary school students in Kenya (USDA 2010).

Problem Statement

School feeding can be defined as the provision of food to children through schools.

The primary sponsorship of the School Feeding Programme in Kenya is primarily through the World Food Programme (WFP) initiatives. The WFP's new five-year development program (2009-2013) has emphasized the need to hand the program over to the Government after 28 years of assistance (WFP, 2008). There is a limited documented study of how the programme has been performing over the years of implementation in Kenya, which then poses a potential threat to sustainability of this programme, and these calls for a proactive assessment of the current performance, hence the need for this study.

In an effort to transition away from WFP assistance and create a more sustainable and locally integrated program, the Ministry of Education began implementing a Homegrown School

Feeding Program (HGSFP) in July of 2009 (Espejo 2009). This is not the first time the government of Kenya has attempted to institute a federally funded school meals program through multi-sectoral cooperation. A short-lived school milk program was introduced in 1980 under former President Moi in order to simultaneously increase primary school enrollment and ensure a stable market for Kenyan dairy producers. The ambitious initiative that provided free milk to 4.3 million primary school students failed shortly after its launch due to high costs, low accountability, and poor road infrastructure (Bogonko 1992).

Objectives

The general objective of this study was to assess the sustainability of school feeding programme in Kenya after WFP exit. School feeding is a well-recognized safety net programme that alleviates hunger while supporting education, nutrition health and community development. How it is implemented is equally paramount.

Literature Review

Literature review gives an overview and synthesizes previous studies (Ngechu, 2006). A review of theoretical and analytical literature and gaps to be filled by the study is provided in this chapter.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The concept of sustainability was first employed in relation to natural resources and how they should be used. Many theorists feel that natural resources are finite and cannot support the world's projected population at current levels of resource utilization and growth. There are those theorists who argue, however, that resources should be defined more broadly to include stocks of technology and know-how. As knowledge and human capability have increased over time, resources have actually increased (Taylor 1993). Sustainability then involves sustaining free markets and human knowledge capacities. In the first view, the threats to sustainability come mainly from overpopulation and consumption, while in the second view the threats to sustainability come from bad policies.

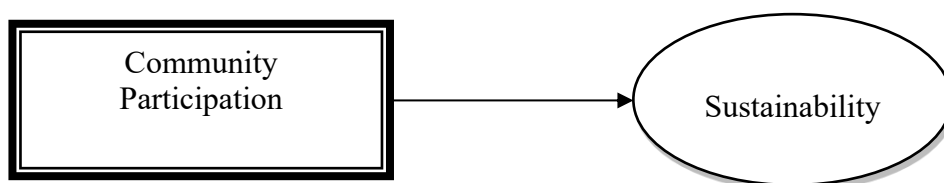


Figure 1

Community Participation

Participation occurs as a community organizes itself and takes responsibility for managing its problems. Taking responsibility includes identifying the problems, developing actions, putting them into place, and following through (Cheetham, 2002). Hence, the role of participation in community development is very important. Community development cannot take place if there is no participation by the community.

Participation can help us target resources more effectively and efficiently (Breuer, 1999). Participation promotes efficiency, effectiveness and equity in the total process of development (Arora, 1979). Hence, involving communities in decision-making would lead to better decisions being made, which are more appropriate and more sustainable because they are owned by the people themselves (Breuer, 1999). Participation can reduce the risk of project failure and the cost of the project.

Community participation is a concept that attempts to bring different stakeholders together for problem solving and decision making (Talbot and Verrinder 2005). Community participation is considered necessary to get community support for educational planning and development (Cole 2007). Community participation refers to peoples' engagement in activities within the educational system. It plays an essential and longstanding role in promoting quality of life (Putnam 2000). Community participation in educational development processes can support and uphold local culture, tradition, knowledge and skill, and create pride in community heritage (Lacy et al. 2002).

Critique of the Existing Literature Relevant to the Study

One of the major factors to ensure sustainability of programs is the availability of funds, whether from governments, private institutions, or donor organizations. In this regard, community participation in education cannot ensure the sustainability of schools by itself since communities often, and in most times have to rely on external funding to keep the program sustained. However, involving community is a way to ensure that the benefits brought by a development program would be maintained after the external interventions are stopped. Thus, sustainability is dependent on the degree of self-reliance developed in target communities and on the social and political commitment in the wider society to development programs that support the continuation of newly self-reliance communities (Lovell, 1992). Community members are expected to be actively involved in the process of interventions through planning, implementation, and evaluation. Furthermore, they are expected to acquire skills and knowledge that would later enable them to take over the project or program.

Research Methodology

This study was limited to all primary schools in Embakasi Constituency. Embakasi has been identified because of the many schools that benefit from the School feeding programs more so the ones that are in the slums.

A descriptive study design was used to collect quantitative and qualitative data. This study adopted deliberate sampling technique. This sampling method involves purposive or deliberate selection of particular units of the universe for constituting a sample which represents the universe (Kothari, 2008). Deliberate sampling method is useful for case studies, pilot studies, qualitative research, and hypothesis development. This sampling technique is generally applied in studies, which are not interested in the parameters of the total population. Data was collected mainly by use of questionnaire method. Questionnaire

had both open ended and closed questions. Drop and pick approach was adopted, where the questionnaire were dropped in the morning and collected later afternoon after completion. The collected data was captured in to the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) software which helped in generating means and standard deviation to help in answering research objective

Findings and Discussions

Response rate

This research targeted 50 people. Drop and pick method was used in getting the respondents fill the questionnaires as indicated above. A total of 46 were received back. The response rate was thus 92%.

Age

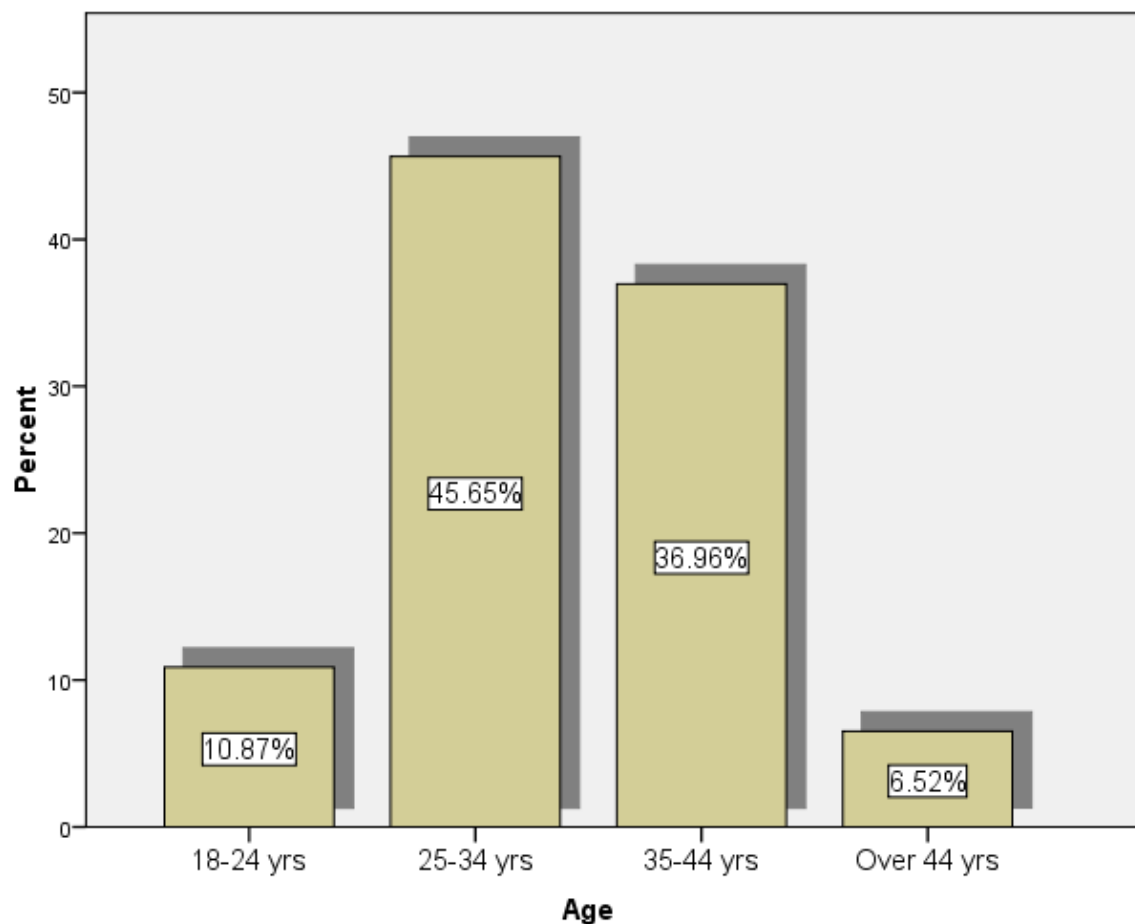


Figure 2

As shown above, majority of respondents were aged 25 – 34 years at 45.65% followed closely by 35 – 44 years at 36.96%.

Gender

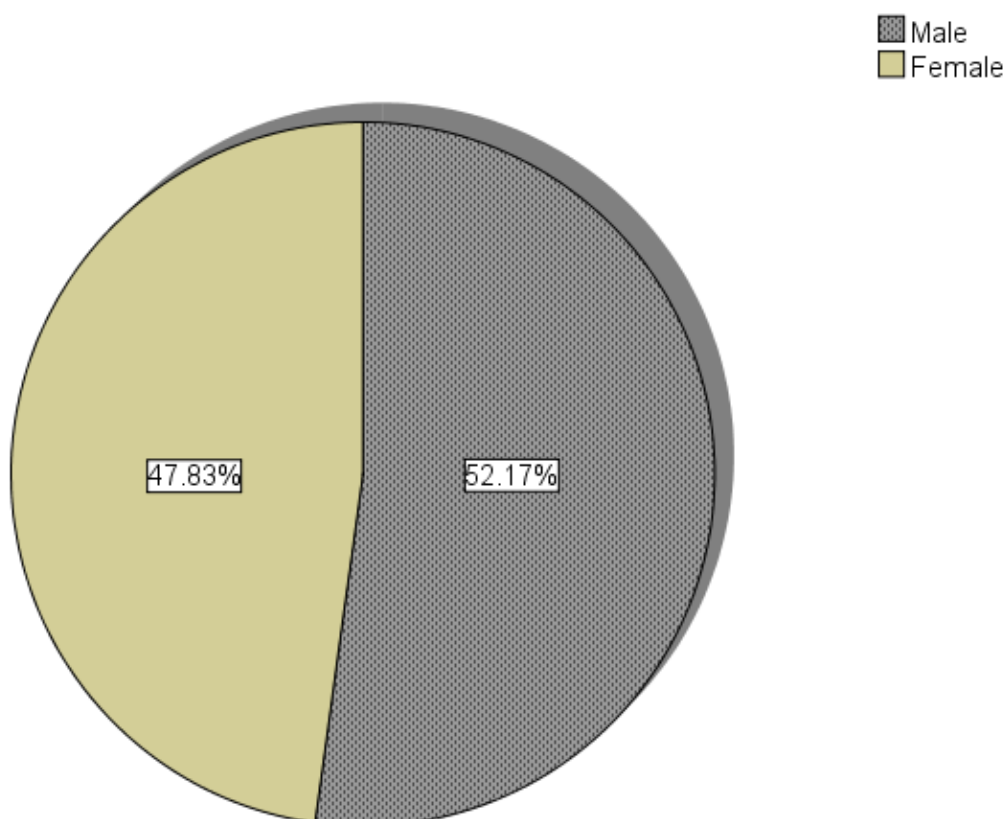


Figure 3: Gender

52.17% of the respondents were male while 47.83% female. There is gender parity in the management of schools in urban areas if this study is anything to go by.

Community Participation

This study sought to know if the community is consulted in the design of feeding programmes and if there was a committee in place of representatives of all stakeholders. It also investigated if Implementation arrangements avoid putting too much pressure and burden on teachers/pupils and if the community participated in paying of cooks or firewood used in the cooking. Below were the findings:

Consultations with the community

Table 1

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	2	4.3	4.3
	Disagree	10	21.7	26.1
	Not sure	5	10.9	37.0
	Agree	17	37.0	73.9
	Strongly agree	12	26.1	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	

At least **63.1%** of the respondents feel that there is consultation in the design meaning that there is a bit of involvement necessary for sustainability.

Availability of a committee of representatives

Table 2

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	5	11.1	11.1
	Not sure	8	17.8	28.9
	Agree	26	57.8	86.7
	Strongly agree	6	13.3	100.0
	Total	45	100.0	
Missing	System	1		
Total		46		

Over 70.1% agree that there is committee in place that comprises representatives of stakeholders which is also key to sustainability.

Community's capability

Table 3

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	2	4.3	4.3
	Disagree	15	32.6	37.0
	Not sure	4	8.7	45.7
	Agree	20	43.5	89.1
	Strongly agree	5	10.9	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	

The community's capability to run the show without putting pressure on parents and pupils is not as whelming with at only 54.4% in support of its capability.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Sustainability has been defined as "the ability to maintain a given flow over time from the base upon which that flow depends," and as "primarily an issue of intergenerational equity" (Norgaard 1992). On maintaining this flow for WFP in schools around Embakasi area, this study sought to investigate how sustainability with regard to Community participation shall be attained after the withdrawal of WFP and the continued influx of pupils. A likert scale of 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree was used to rate community participation. A mean of 3.51 on a scale of 1 to 5. This therefore means that sustainability will be achieved given the adequate involvement of the community.

Recommendations

This study recommended that a policy of involvement of the community be developed to make it official. This would provide platform to engage with the community and ensure conflicts of interest would not arise particularly when foods are to be procured. Again such a policy would address long term engagements with stakeholders in the programme.

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